



# DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to [DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov)

## Shirley's Mississippi "vacation"

From Louise Wing, Program Manager

Ionia County DHS, Ionia

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Most of us look forward to using our annual leave to take a nice leisurely vacation; not **Shirley Pyle**, a family independence manager with Ionia County DHS. She used her vacation time to head to Ocean Springs, Miss. with her sister and other



Ionia County FIM Shirley Pyle and a team member work on a house in Ocean Springs, Miss., located in the circled area below. This is how they spent their December leave.

members of the Cornerstone United Methodist Church in Caledonia, Mich. And while Ocean Springs sounds like it could be a resort area, it is instead one area where Hurricane Katrina took out her wrath.

From December 3-11 Shirley became part of a work crew with Christians Organized for Relief Efforts. This was no visit to a spa. The crew slept in a YMCA on the trip down to Mississippi and slept in Army tents donated by Russia once they got there. Port-a-potties, showers rigged up on flat bed trucks, and community meals cooked by another volunteer work crew were as fancy as things got.

Shirley's crew worked on three houses in Ocean Springs (near Biloxi) and Pascagoula, Miss. They pulled up floors, pulled down drywall, pulled out furnaces, water heaters and appliances. Everything in the storm-damaged houses had to come out.



Using chemical sprayers and wearing chemical respirators, they then sprayed the home interiors with a solution of bleach, water and dish soap. The formula had to be just right to avoid excessive suds! The homes were saturated with this solution to kill the black mold that was everywhere.

Shirley's crew worked on homes that were about a mile-and-a-half from the coast. These homes were affected by the storm surge – 52 inches of water enveloped the homes for 15 minutes. That short burst of nature caused total devastation. One of the homes her crew worked on represented what many people in Mississippi are going through.

Poverty was already a factor for the homeowner and now her home is destroyed. That homeowner is currently living in her driveway in a 32-foot, two-window trailer provided by FEMA. She can live in the trailer free for 18 months. She hopes to have enough money saved up by then to afford the wallboard to start repairing her home.

"There is an overwhelming need there for folks who don't have other resources," Shirley said. "Only 15 percent of the people affected had flood insurance. The rest are on their own.

"They need help to get back on their feet. Jobs are scarce (and) businesses are closed. It's a humbling experience. It puts your own problems in perspective."

Shirley did see signs of the spirit some of the residents still have. One neighborhood of FEMA trailers held a decorating contest, brightening up their temporary homes with Christmas lights.

■ For more information, see [www.corebasecamp.com](http://www.corebasecamp.com)

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*In the spirit of the season*



## Training unit makes holiday donation in lieu of gift sharing

From Kathy Ann Johnson  
Technical Assistance Team, Lansing  
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The DHS Technical Assistance Team training unit, under the leadership of Gwen Henderson, donated \$210 to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen this holiday season. The team decided that, instead of exchanging gifts this year, they would make a donation to a charity that provided food to the needy and also provided services to children.

Services provided by the Detroit-based Capuchin Soup Kitchen include:

- About 2,500 hot meals per day at their two locations at an average cost of \$ 1.17 per meal.
- About 300,000 pounds of food distributed per month to families.
- About 50,000 articles of clothing given to clients per month.
- About 15 pieces of furniture or appliances given to 3-5 families per day.
- Showers and a change of clothing for up to 30 homeless and poorly housed persons per day.
- Jefferson House, a substance abuse treatment program servicing up to 12 indigent men.
- A children's library and art therapy studio serving up to 100 children per month.
- A 25,000 square foot urban farm project.

Brother Jerry Smith, executive director of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, sent us a letter acknowledging the organization's appreciation. **For more information about this charitable organization go to [www.visionsacred.org/capuchin.html](http://www.visionsacred.org/capuchin.html)**

## Generous county employees pay up to dress down

By Morgan Jarema  
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They are on the front lines of advocacy for needy families. And the 300 employees of the Kent County Department of Human Services – which provides the Santa Claus Girls with names of families that need help with children's gifts – are willing to dig into their own pockets to help. In 2003 and this year, employees raised nearly \$300 for the Press-sponsored charity, donating at least \$5 each to wear jeans to work one Friday.

"Our people are so generous," said Mary Tubergen, an administrative assistant who for five years has tracked donations for the agency's casual days. Tubergen's boss, Kathleen Greiner, first pitched the idea to make Santa Claus Girls a recipient of the agency's casual Friday fundraisers.

"We've been involved with the Santa Claus Girls for years and years," Greiner said. "We are part of the effort, and we really appreciate what Santa Claus Girls does for the people we help."

Santa Claus Girls is one of dozens of charities that have benefited from the Kent agency's casual Fridays, which started in 1998. Other groups that have received donations include the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Red Cross Hurricane Katrina Relief, Grand Rapids Public Schools, the Women's Resource Center and the Equestrian Therapeutic Riding Center.

To date, county employees have dressed down to raise more than \$93,700 for charity.

"They really give back, let alone work with the system," Tubergen said. "They're very giving people here."



## Local office provides Christmas baskets to needy families

From Lori Lindsey, Community Resource Coordinator  
Wayne County DHS-Forest-Ellery District, Detroit  
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The Adopt A Family Christmas Committee – or AFCC – at the Wayne County DHS Forest-Ellery District office hosted a casual day fundraiser and silent auction in December to raise money for Christmas gift baskets for some of our low income families. The employees were surveyed by their staff representative for families to adopt for Christmas.



Forest-Ellery committee members that organized the fundraiser (left to right) [Angela Jenkins](#), [Tanya Williams](#), [Tamarra Glenn](#), [Lori Lindsey](#), [Robin Stanford](#), [Gwendolyn Manning](#), [Juanita Seay](#) and [Debra Hurt](#).

generosity of our employees we were able to extend a jolly holiday to two additional families, so five adopted families with 15 children received Christmas baskets. Each child received 2-3 clothing outfits and toys in their gift basket.

The gift baskets were delivered to the families Dec. 20 by a few of the committee members. The AFCC members are [Tanya Williams](#), [Gwendolyn Manning](#), [Angela Jenkins](#), [Tamarra Glenn](#), [Robin Stanford](#), [Juanita Seay](#), [Debra Hurt](#) and [Lori Lindsey](#).

More holiday stories coming next issue

The employees were asked to donate \$5 for the casual day fundraiser or to bring in new items such as toys, hats, gloves, socks, underwear, and clothes for the children. In addition, staff donated new or rarely used items for the auction. The following auction items generated big bucks for the event: a multi-colored leather skirt, Louie Vuitton leather backpack (purse), gold plated chargers, glass bowl set, three wine glass sets, and sequin swing coat.

Two fundraising events held in December were so successful we doubled our expected goal and raised more \$600. Due to the overwhelming participation and

## Thanksgiving dinner at Christmas courtesy of generous DHS staff

From Lane Stewart, Family Independence Manager  
Kent County DHS, Grand Rapids  
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Each year our unit pools money for a Christmas project in lieu of giving gifts to each other. This year we decided to do something for residents of the Veterans' Home. Then we discovered [Sharlene Organ](#) is doing an internship at the Veterans Administration Medical Center.

The facility counsels veterans who are essentially homeless but who can't get into the Veterans' Home because of limited space. They are living wherever they can and many are in pretty bad shape emotionally. For the past two years private parties had donated Thanksgiving turkeys. This year, however, no one had come forth and the veterans were very disappointed.



So our gift list was turkeys. We collected \$160 and [Kim Williams](#) contacted a friend who negotiated with Spartan to get a good price. On Dec. 19 [Mary Lingeman](#) and [Sylvester Junior](#) picked up 161 pounds of turkey, which translates into 14 birds, and delivered them to the counseling center.

Sharlene was with a group of veterans when the turkeys arrived. She said it was a very emotional moment when they saw the turkeys. One veteran said, "They didn't forget us, after all." Another elderly man started to cry. Sharlene said, at that point, she cried too. Our gift was appreciated beyond what we could have imagined.

■ *Sharlene Organ, Kim Williams and Mary Lingeman are family independence specialists and Sylvester Junior is an eligibility specialist, all with Kent County.*

Date: Nov. 30  
To: Angelo Nicholas, Director  
Macomb County DHS, Clinton Township  
Subj: Gary Buckles

We are writing to commend Gary Buckles of the Delco Boulevard office. Mr. Buckles was our daughter's worker for just a few short months. However, in that time, he did more to help her out than any of her previous workers ever had before.

Upon learning that Amy had become almost completely bed-bound, he was able to find her an optometrist who could come to our home to perform an eye examination.

When he learned that her previous worker had not been to visit in almost a year (despite being informed of the physical changes in Amy) he also adjusted the amount of money she received to pay caregiver services to reflect her current needs.

More than the above services, however, was the apparent compassion he had for Amy. He spent time talking to her and really listening to her needs and concerns. To Mr. Buckles, Amy was more than another person to see or a form to fill out. All three of us appreciated the respect with which he treated her.

After learning of Amy's death in June of this year, Mr. Buckles took the time to write a tribute to Amy which he sent to us.

I cannot begin to tell you how much that meant to us. His thoughtfulness, combined with his tribute, touched us deeply. We have enclosed a copy for you.

We do not know if you have recognition awards for your employees but, if you do, it is our sincere hope that Gary Buckles be recognized for his compassion, his attention to detail, his thoughtfulness, and his excellence in the performance of his job.

**Geoffrey & Dorothy Wegehaupt**  
New Baltimore

■ *Gary Buckles is an adult services specialist with Macomb County DHS. He wrote the tribute at right.*

Your letters,  
intercepted  
and otherwise

## Precious Angel

Dedicated to Geoffrey and Dorothy in memory of Amy  
*From Gary Buckles*

She was yours and you were hers. She was strong and she was weak. The sparkle in her eyes...that's what I remember. And if you ever walked through her door...you couldn't take your eyes off of her. Her voice was soft and soothing. She couldn't move and she couldn't walk. At first glance you felt sorry for her. I defy you to look in her eyes. She lifted everyone's heart who dared to step into her presence. Her bedroom was her castle. Her three dogs curled up beside her, the lavender surroundings and her two favorite people always by her side. She had it all. Just imagine...

She was an angel. I wish everyone could spend a moment with her. If only you could see the strength and joy in her eyes. Not an athlete, not a movie star, nor a politician. I walked to the side of her bed and looked into her eyes. She looked into my eyes and smiled. I was tired and busy. We said a few words and I turned around and left. I was energized and fulfilled. My heart skipped for a while. Oh, how she touched me. I only saw her 2 times, I thought I was cheated. That smile was priceless. After careful thought, I was honored.

She was in pain and she was tired. She had dreams and aspirations she would never be able to grasp in this world. But she was happy because she was steering her ship. Many thought it was the dystrophy, but I looked up in the sky and I knew she was an angel. You turned her thousands of times. You held her hands thousands of times and you loved her unconditionally. Angels were born to fly away. You were the best mother and father an angel could ask for. Now it's time for the Lord to reign. You did your job. You were soldiers. You couldn't love her anymore and she couldn't love you any more. You were a family. That is the highest honor, you can have on earth.

She was a mustard seed and she will continue to be. Lord, I never seen heaven but when she smiled it was the beauty of the ocean, blossoming flowers and the moon. Don't worry, you did your job. She didn't fight and she didn't cry. She wasn't afraid, Lord. You knew and she knew...